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Learning outcomes and qualifications in a changing labour market: the case of teacher education in Greece (Patras)

Obiettivi formativi e qualifiche in un mercato del lavoro in evoluzione: il caso della formazione per insegnanti in Grecia (Patrasso)

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Abstract

This paper focuses on competences for primary education teachers, which have to be developed during their initial education. Furthermore, we will try to link the discussion on learning outcomes to a comprehensive framework of social needs, central political choices, the strategies of specialized University Departments and students' preferences. To achieve our aim, we will present the results of a research carried out with students in the last year of their initial teacher education at a Greek University (University of Patras). The research used a questionnaire based on competences proposed by Tuning for the scientific field of Education. The results highlight two main points: a) the persistence of tradition and the power of reproduction; b) the difficulty of tuning and harmonizing social needs, political choices, University Department strategy and students' wishes.

Keywords: teacher education; university; competences; Tuning.

Abstract

Il presente contributo ha per oggetto le competenze richieste agli insegnanti di scuola primaria, da sviluppare nel corso della loro formazione iniziale. L'approccio adottato nell'analisi dei *learning outcomes* fa riferimento a riflessioni riguardanti bisogni sociali, scelte di natura politica, strategie accademiche a livello dipartimentale, richieste dei soggetti in apprendimento. Il contributo intende presentare i risultati di una ricerca realizzata con studenti dell'ultimo anno del percorso di formazione iniziale all'Università di Patrasso (Grecia). Tale ricerca ha fatto uso di un questionario costruito sulla base delle competenze identificate nella ricerca Tuning (Area *Education*). I risultati conseguiti hanno messo in luce due aspetti: a) la permanenza della tradizione ed il potere della riproduzione; b) la difficoltà di mettere a punto e armonizzare bisogni sociali, scelte di carattere politico, strategie accademiche gestite a livello di dipartimenti, domande dei soggetti in apprendimento.

Keywords: formazione degli insegnanti; università; competenze; Tuning.

1. Introduction: Describing the frame of reference

The landscape of teacher education in Greece today is a product of a major reform in the 1980s (Presidential Degree 320/1983). This reform contributed to the upgrading of the institutions for primary school teacher education (pre-school and primary school) to university level studies and the linking of this training to the educational sciences. The reform was the outcome of a government initiative to meet the corresponding demand from the teaching union bodies and it provoked an intense reaction from the universities, which did not believe that these studies were scientific. To overcome this, teacher education was directly linked to the educational sciences, so as to ensure the scientific nature of the studies. These Departments were named University Departments of Pedagogy since the Greek word "παιδαγωγική" was preferred to the more used "sciences of education", which was considered a transfer of the epistemological experience from abroad (Antoniou, 2012; Stamelos, 1999; Taratori-Tsalkatidou, 2006; Tourtouras, Kyridis & Karamouzas, 2018).

Then, from the 1990s, and especially from 2000 and on, with the growth of second and third level education (Master and Doctorate) as well as of life-long learning, and non-formal education, one could find a lot of other graduates in these Departments and on their courses of Master Degree or of PhD, since there are no other specialised Departments (educational sciences or adult education) in Greek universities.

In total in Greece, there are nine (9) Departments for primary school teachers, nine (9) Departments for pre-school teachers and one (1) Department of special education. It takes four years to acquire the 1st level of degree (Bachelor).

When we began to talk about learning outcomes in the context of the creation of the European Higher Education Area, these Departments had to combine as much the generic competences as the specific competences that concerned teacher education and the educational sciences, to use the phraseology of the Tuning methodology. This proved difficult since a commonly accepted balance was never found and the curriculum in each Department was shaped by the internal power relationships amongst its professors (Mitchell, 2015). To give a general picture, we could say that up to the end of the previous century the Educational Sciences were promoted, perhaps to consolidate the scientific nature of the studies, while later, school subjects and how to teach them were put forward more vigorously. In recent years teaching practice is becoming the most important one (Androusou & Afghitidou, 2013; Sofos, 2015; Stamelos, 2012).

2. Defining the problem from the Departments' point of view

The main problem that these Departments are facing today is the demographic crisis. Indicatively, from 1979 to 2015 the number of pupils in the country's primary schools fell by about 30% (from 970.000 to 640.000 of whom 60.000-70.000 are of immigrant origin) (http://www.statistics.gr/en/home/). In addition, in recent years (since 2008) and due to the economic crisis births have fallen by 27%, going from around 118.000 to 92.000 (European Commission, 2016). Consequently, primary education has already felt the drop in pupil numbers while in coming years this reduction in numbers will be felt in secondary education too. In addition, the country's strict commitments with the Troika to drastically restrict recruitment created an environment with very few prospects for the graduates of those Departments. It should be noted that primary schools and secondary schools are about 95% state funded.

Based on this data, a discussion has been underway since 2011 on the potential closing down or merging of Departments as well as on a more general restructuring of the educational system and hence teacher education. The continual changes of government and the political culture of conflict which predominates do not help, but the issue has already been raised (Tourtouras, Kyridis & Karamouzas, 2018). On the other hand, trade union organizations, which traditionally played a decisive role, seem to be finding themselves in a period of introspection and conflict both within the organizations (the various specializations) and between them: the reduction in the pupil population forces them to search to recompose existing supply (secondary school teachers to have access to primary education, primary school teachers to have access at least to compulsory secondary education – Gymnasium − the kindergarten teachers to Primary school, and so on).

Within this framework, various Departments of Pedagogy have begun to search for professional paths for their graduates beyond teacher training either recommending specializations (for example, cross-cultural education-education of refugees, school social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, school robotics, education officials in organizations, and so on) or widening the prospects for employment in non-profit organizations, adult education and so on. As a result, all this creates a state of flux in terms of the formation of a curriculum based on learning outcomes and the specialization of graduates' qualifications.

With this issue as our base, we conducted research amongst 4th year students in a Department of Primary Education (University of Patras), in the academic year 2017-2018, with the aim of investigating which competences students consider important.

3. Research aim

The aim of the research is to set out and analyse students' opinion of their curricula (evaluative judgement) and the extent of their preparation for their future profession (self-evaluative judgement). In addition, we investigate the competences that students consider to be important.

4. The research: description

The research was conducted in two phases. In the first (pilot) the Tuning competences were translated into Greek and given to 22 students in the academic year 2016-2017. This experience revealed that, on the one hand, the lists of competences were rather long, and their completion was tiring, and on the other, some competences were not understood and the sense of repetition was also emphasized. Consequently, a double adaptation was required in the local context, on the one hand with the restriction, that is to say, the condensing of the recommended competences, and, on the other, with the readjustment or specialization of some others. The new, modified questionnaire was distributed once more to 17 students and appeared to work better.

The main research was conducted at the beginning of the academic year 2017-2018, with 4th year students in the Pedagogical Department of Primary Education at the University of Patras. They are students in the 7th semester of their studies who already had three years of experience as students on the curriculum in question. The total number of students in the year is 230.

The distribution of the questionnaires took place during the first meeting of the 4th year students (7th semester) for the arrangement of their teaching practice (internship) in schools, for the academic year 2017-2018. 179 questionnaires were completed, from which one was removed due to incorrect completion (total percentage 78%).

5. Research tool

The questionnaire was made up of three parts: a) demographic-educational-socio/economic characteristics, b) the Tuning competences (Tuning, 2002; 2007; 2009) and c) questions regarding the needs for study support, on an educational, psychological and counselling level. The last does not concern this text. This text focuses on the second part and is enriched by the first.

For each competence, three different approaches are proposed:

1. how important it is considered to be by the students (legitimacy of the proposed competences) (hereinafter referred to as "the first column");
2. how often they encountered it in the curriculum (evaluation of the curriculum) (hereinafter referred to as "the second column");
3. how much they believe that they themselves have developed it (self-evaluation) (hereinafter referred to as "the third column").

The answers are given on a five points scale with 1 'not at all' and 5 'very much'.

6. Profile of the sample

Our sample is heavily dominated by women, with 81% of the sample being women. Their previous school career was particularly good, and 50% of them had a high school leaving grade between 18 and 20 out of 20, while there is no student with a leaving grade below 14/20. Although the use of grades in Lyceum in Greece is flexible, given that it is the results of national exams that are important for university entrance, the existence of half the sample in the category of "excellent" reveals a group with successful school attendance. Here it should be added that the year they entered the Department (2014-2015), the required grade for entry was 16/20, being a demanding pass mark for a particularly competitive national exam. In other words, we have a student population with a successful educational profile.

As far as the geographical origin of the sample is concerned, this has strong regional characteristics. Indeed the majority (54%) comes from the region of Western Greece, of which Patras, where the University of Patras is based, is the capital. 29% come from the wider Athens region and the neighbouring region of the Peloponnese while just 16% come from other regions of the country, or from abroad (Cyprus).

As far as the social origin of the students is concerned, data was collected on the educational level of their parents, and their profession. For the latter, the nomenclature ISCO 08 (International Standard Classification of Occupations) was used, which is used by the Greek statistical agency, and then the categories were condensed into three (high-middle-low). For education, three major categorizations were also created: low (compulsory education or below, levels 1-2-3 on the European Qualification Framework[EQF]); middle (high school graduates − level 4 − and level 5 of the EQF); high (graduates of levels 6-7-8).

In terms of educational level, what dominates in the case of the mothers as much as the fathers, is the middle level, with 46% and 44% respectively. In the category high, 30% of the mothers and 26% of the fathers were to be found, while in the low the percentages are 21% and 24% respectively.

As far as the social level is concerned, it should firstly be noted that in a country where unemployment is over 20%, the unemployment rate among the students' mothers is 7% and the fathers 3%. Of course, three points should be noted:

- of the working fathers, one in three (31%) does not have permanent or steady work, while the corresponding percentage for the mothers comes to 51%;
- the very high percentage of retirees, 17% for the fathers and 9% for the mothers. This fact perhaps reveals a generalized phenomenon in the reality of the Greek crisis, in other words the mass exit of workers/employees (particularly from the public sector) aimed at the protection of established pension rights;
- one in three mothers (34%) state that their profession is "domestic work", while 1% of the fathers claim the same.

Of those remaining, 44% of the fathers are placed in the middle category as against 35% of the mothers. This is the largest category, chiefly office employees. 12% of the mothers and 8% of the fathers are placed in the highest category. In this category, children of teachers dominate, at 11% of our sample. If however we add to those the retired teachers, then their percentage surpasses 15% and is close to 20%. Consequently one out of six students has at least one parent who is a teacher (working or retired). Finally, in the low category (workers-farmers) 5% of the mothers and 29% of the fathers are to be found. While we cannot develop this in this paper, it seems that the Department in question attracts children from the new middle class that was created after the regime change (1974) and especially in the 1980s and 90s and which comes in for intense pressure from the economic crisis, while it also holds on to a part of the traditional public for whom the profession of the teacher constitutes an accessible route to social mobility for the lower social category (workers-farmers).

7. Research results: the students' educational preferences

One of the interesting points appeared to be the preferences of the students in the sample regarding their studies.

The majority of the sample (55%) had made this particular Department their first choice[1]. 36% had it in 2nd or 3rd place and just 10% had it below 3rd place. Consequently this is a Department that receives students whose priority it is to be there.

To the question of whether their attitude to the teaching profession was positive or not, 92% responded positive and just 8% negative.

[1] Here it should be noted that according to the system of access to higher education in Greece, candidate students sit national exams and then once they receive the results they complete an electronic form with their preferred Departments (study programs). The entry mark for each Department is shaped, on the one hand by the number of admissions per Department (which is determined by the Ministry), and, on the other, by the preferences of the candidates as they are set out in their electronic form.

To the question of whether they had really wanted to study in a Pedagogical Department of Primary Education, 88% responded positively, 8% negatively and 4% answered "I did not know". In total there appears to be, on the one hand, a vast majority of students, approximately 90%, with a positive attitude towards their studies in such a Department and a positive view of the teaching profession, and, on the other hand, a "hard core", small but existent, made up of 8% of the students who are in the particular Department "out of need" and who do not like the profession of the teacher.

Finally, an interesting finding has to do with what we called "my dream studies", in other words the studies they would have dreamed of doing if there had not been other restrictions or difficulties. In this question, the percentage of those who stated that the teaching profession was indeed their dream, fell to 37%. This is a high percentage but still approximately half of that which those who chose these specific studies as a matter of priority mentioned. In addition, 43% state another profession and 20% preferred not to answer. The finding is significant in the sense that the students stated a long, wide-ranging list of other professions in their responses. The investigation of this phenomenon requires separate qualitative research with in-depth personal interviews. Consequently, it remains to be analysed. Despite that, and from a first empirical approach, multiple factors seem to affect the variable, such as:

- entry into the particular Department after failure to enter the desired Department (for example, medicine, which has the highest entry requirements);
- choice of studies near home in order to limit expenses (for example, the University of Patras does not have a Law School or many of the Social Sciences Departments);
- choice affected by family-imposed restrictions, given that the family in Greece is still powerful and our sample is predominantly female (for example, family restrictions are perhaps imposed on arts professions, such as dance, theatre, cinema, the arts and so on, or "dangerous" professions such as that of the firefighter, police officer or army personnel).

Finally, another major finding, which however is not central to this paper, is that the statistical significance control did not give more than very few and fragmented statistically significant differences in the cross-checking of the social origin of the students with their education preferences and/or their performance. This strengthens the indication that this is a Department that receives the new middle class which at least in the case of Greece does not appear to have shaped class characteristics and is based more on its (temporary) economic power.

8. Research results: statistical analysis

Next in our research we proceeded to the analysis of the responses by competence. In essence we had two lists of competences, the generic and the specific. The following results emerged from the statistical analysis (Figure 1).

	In terms of their importance (1st column)	In terms of their existence in the curriculum (2nd column)	In terms of personal growth (3rd column)
Means (Generic competences)	4,5	3,6	3,8
Means (Specific competences)	4,3	3,6	3,6

Figure 1. Processing of responses.

Based on the results in Figure 1 it appears that the proposed competences, the generic as much as the specific (for teacher education and educational sciences proposed in a unique list), enjoy great approval by the students in the sample, 4,5 out of 5 for the first and 4,3 out of 5 the second. Consequently a strong legitimacy of the competences proposed by Tuning as a discussion framework is documented.

These competences can be found in the curriculum in a manner that is judged to be significant at 3,6 and 3,6 out of 5, respectively, but clearly with a smaller average than their objective importance. The statistical control (compare means) revealed a statistically significant difference between importance (1st column) and presence in the curriculum (2nd column) as well as their personal growth (3rd column). In addition, in terms of the generic competences, the difference between the 2nd and 3rd columns is statistically significant. If one remains with the third column (self-evaluation), the students seem to believe that they have developed those competences with an average of 3,8 (generic) and 3,6 (specific) out of 5. In other words, they believe that they have developed them to a satisfactory degree, but not as much as they would like. Then, once the average for each variable (competence) had been found, for both the generic and the specific competences, we performed a compare means between each variable and the total mean for each column. The analysis gave us the following results.

8.1. The generic competences

The overall picture for the generic competences is the following (Figure 2).

	Generics column 1	Generics column 2	Generics column 3
Significant statistical difference		-1	-1
			-2
		-3	-3
			-4
		5	5
	-6	-6	-6
	-7		-7
	-8	-8	-8
		9	
	-12	-12	
	-14		-14
		16	16
		17	17
	-18	-18	
		-19	-19
			20
	-21	-21	-21
		22	22

Figure 2. Compare means for generic competences.

Figure 2 is read as follows: in the 1st column (absolute competence significance) seven (7) competences in total had a statistically significant difference to the overall mean. These were competences 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 21. These competences had a negative statistically significant difference to the overall mean. In other words they were considered to be less important by the students. They are:

- (6) ability to communicate in a second language;
- (7) skills in the use of ICTs;
- (8) ability to undertake research at an appropriate level;
- (12) ability to adapt to and act in new situations;
- (14) ability to identify, pose and resolve problems;
- (18) ability to motivate people and move toward common goals;
- (21) capacity to work with others from different cultures (in an international context).

The separation of these generic competences from the "significant" competences reveals a traditional and static view of the profession of the teacher since they see it as a profession that:

- is part of a national education system without contact with other systems (negation of competences 6 and 21);
- aims at the transfer of standardized knowledges determined by others (negation of the importance of competences 12, 14, 18) through the method of the textbook (negation of the importance of competence 7. Here it is interesting that the students who are extremely familiar with mobile phones and social networks, do not link it to school learning);
- has no need of research since it simply reproduces knowledges determined by others (negation of competence 8).

Indeed, the last one casts doubt on the 1984 reform itself, with the superiorization of those studies, in the sense that entry into the University marked the need to ask questions and for those questions to be answered in a coordinated and systematic way (scientific research).

In terms of the results in the second and third columns, it is worth mentioning that they show continuity. This continuity may occur across the three columns, or it might be in only two.

Competences 6, 8 and 21 appear in all three columns with a negative statistically significant difference. In other words, the students believe that: a) the ability to communicate in a second language, b) the ability to undertake research at an appropriate level and c) the capacity to work with others from different cultures (in an international context) are neither important nor developed in the curriculum, nor have they themselves developed them. In two columns a total of eleven (11) competences appear:

- (1) ability for abstract thinking, analysis and synthesis (negative divergence);
- (3) ability to plan and manage (school) time (negative divergence);
- (5) ability to communicate both orally and through the written word in first language (positive divergence);
- (7) skills in the use of ICTs (negative divergence);
- (12) ability to adapt to and act in new situations (negative divergence);
- (14) ability to identify, pose and resolve problems (negative divergence);
- (16) ability to work in a team (positive divergence);

- (17) capacity to communicate and cooperate with others (positive divergence);
- (18) ability to motivate people and move toward common goals (negative divergence);
- (19) ability to communicate with parents on education issues (negative divergence);
- (22) capacity to do things by yourself (ability to work autonomously) (positive divergence).

What can one learn from the results?

In the case of:

- (1) the first competence (Ability for abstract thinking, analysis and synthesis) the students believe that while it is important (without a statistical difference from the overall means) they have not encountered it satisfactorily in their curriculum and nor have they developed it themselves. From this perhaps one can discern a generalised problem in Greek education, which is usually based on memorization learning and sterile reproduction, factors which then pass into the students' manner of evaluation;
- (3) in the case of the 3rd competence (Ability to plan and manage [school] time), the students believed that it is important (without a statistical difference from the overall means), but they have not encountered it satisfactorily in their curriculum and nor have they developed it themselves. Lack of experience seems to contribute to the shaping of this picture, and at this point it should be noted that the main part of teaching practice had not yet taken place when the students were asked;
- (5) the case of competence 5 (Ability to communicate both orally and through the written word in first language) is different in the sense that it is overly present in the curriculum and the students believe that they have developed it very well. The result should not surprise us since it is the Greek language;
- (7) the case of the 7th competence (Skills in the use of ICTs) is interesting that the students stated that they do not consider it important and they have not developed it themselves even though it is part of their curriculum. Consequently, either the way in which it exists may not be effective, or the students do not link the use of computers with their work in the classroom. Here, it should be taken into consideration that a large part of the students come from humanity sections of schools so they do not get on especially well with the sciences;
- (12) the case of competence 12 (Ability to adapt to and act in new situations) is yet another variation. While the students do not consider it important for the profession and they have not encountered it on their curriculum, they themselves claim that they have developed it at least as much as the others. Possibly here there is an underlying conflict between the individual's ability to adapt and the difficulty of seeing the changes in the profession as positive;
- (14) the case of competence 14 (Ability to identify, pose and resolve problems) is similar to competence 7. The students do not consider it important, they have not developed it themselves but it is on the curriculum. Consequently what is posed, at least initially, is a question regarding the effectiveness of the curriculum concerning this competence. On the other hand, it may be something more profound since this competence is crucial for the profession's way of thinking. If the way of thinking is that of a teacher who transfers knowledges about an object from a book, then this competence cannot be important;

- (16) competence 16 (Ability to work in a team) is the same case as that of competence 5. It is considered as important as the means of the generic competences but in the curriculum it is over-existent and the students themselves feel that they have already developed it well. It is an indication that in this competence the curriculum works effectively and the students are satisfied;
- (17) the same holds true for competence 17 (Capacity to communicate and cooperate with others). The students consider it as important as the generic means signifies, they have encountered it a lot on their curriculum and they themselves have developed it a lot. Consequently, it is also a strong point of the curriculum;
- (18) competence 18 (Ability to motivate people and move toward common goals) has the same characteristics as competence 12. They do not consider it important, they have not encountered it enough on the curriculum but they themselves consider that they have developed it as much as the average development in the self-evaluation column;
- competences 16, 17, and 18 seem to form a group and to point toward a specific view of the work of the teachers being held by the students. The first two have a positive divergence while the third, negative. What the students appear to be saying is that we can work in a group and communicate with others in the framework of our work which is the reproduction of set knowledge from a school textbook. In contrast, the mobility of people for the accomplishment of common goals (that do not have to do with school knowledge, the school classroom and its books) is not a part of our job;
- (19) competence 19 (Ability to communicate with parents on education issues) is the same case as competences 1 and 3. The students say that communication with the parents is as important as the overall means but they have not encountered it in the curriculum nor have they themselves developed it. It is a vital competence that perhaps points to a gap in the curriculum;
- (22) finally, competence 22 (Capacity to do things by yourself (ability to work autonomously) seems to have the same characteristics as competences 5, 16 and 17. The students find it as important as the average of the competences, they have encountered it a lot in the curriculum and they themselves believe that they have it especially developed. The result for this particular competence could be considered surprising and conflicting in relation to the result in other competences such as 12 (Ability to adapt to and act in new situations) or 14 (Ability to identify, pose and resolve problems). One should see it as much as the result of education as a view of the profession. The first has to do with the kind of educational obligations that are required of the students. For example, the students – chiefly female students – learn from, for example, the "arts and crafts cycle" to do crafts for the arts lesson or again to write individual or group projects in the context of other lessons, and often, their content is no more than the result of a collage from various sources without personal investment. Consequently, competence 22 can be considered developed but within a specific framework.

Finally, there are three generic competences − 2 (Capacity to apply knowledge in practical situations), 4 (Knowledge and understanding of the subject area and understanding of the profession) and 20 (Appreciation of diversity and multiculturality) − where the first two show negative and the third positive statistically significant difference only in the third column (self-evaluation). Competence 2 seems to reveal the students' anxiety due to lack of experience (it should be remembered that the research took place before the main stage of their teaching practice in schools). Competence 4 raises questions regarding the

effectiveness and clarity of the curriculum. The third seems to reveal a strong point of the curriculum that concerns the need for the sensitization of the teacher to culturally differentiated school classrooms.

8.2. The specific competences

In the specific competences, the overall picture is as follows (Figure 3).

	Specific column 1	Specific column 2	Specific column 3
Significant statistical difference			3
	5		5
			6
	-7		
	-9	-9	-9
			-10
	-14	-14	-14
	-15	-15	-15
		16	
	18	18	18
	19	19	19
		20	20
		21	
		22	
	25		

Figure 3. Compare means for generic competences.

Figure 3 is read in the same way as figure 2. As far as the first column with the absolute value of the specific competences is concerned:

- four (4) competences have a positive statistically significant difference from the overall means of the column: 5 (Ability to recognise and to respect students' differences and the different ways to learn), 18 (Knowledge of school subjects to be taught), 19 (Ability to communicate effectively with groups and individuals) and 25 (Ability to adjust the curriculum to a specific group with specific needs);
- four (4) competences display negative statistically significant difference in terms of the overall means of the column: 7 (Understanding of the structures and purposes of educational system(s), 9 (Ability to do educational research in different contexts), 14 (Ability to lead or coordinate a multidisciplinary educational team) (in the context of a Comenius project, for example) and 15 (Ability to understand trends in education and be able to recognise possible applications).

Of the four (4) competences with a positive difference, the last three belong to teacher training and the first to the educational sciences. Of the four (4) competences with a negative difference, all four belong to the educational sciences. Consequently, one can see

that students' priority is the competences that are linked to teacher training and less to the educational sciences (which, according to the logic of the 1984 reform, were to have given university status to the curriculum, the main reason for the introduction of scientific research into the students' curriculum).

More analytically, the four competences with a positive sign suggest that the students consider it of primary importance to comprehend the cognitive objects of the school, to adapt them to different school classes while important too is the understanding of individuality in learning and to be able to work in a group in the classroom.

On the other hand, they claim that whatever goes beyond the school classroom (for one to realize that a school classroom is part of an educational system, to be able to and to want to do research on that, to understand the wider trends and processes of change in the educational system and work beyond the educational system with teachers from other systems) are not priorities of the profession.

This description coincides with the picture that emerged for the generic competences. As far as the results of the second and third columns are concerned, it is worth remaining wherever we find continuity. This continuity may be across the three columns or it may be in only two of them.

In all three columns, two (2) specific competences appear that always have a positive statistically significant difference in terms of each column's means, and there are three (3) competences with a negative difference. More analytically:

- the two specific competences with a positive sign are 18 (Knowledge of school subjects to be taught) and 19 (Ability to communicate effectively with groups and individuals). In other words, students believe that they are the two most important specific competences, they have encountered them a lot on their curriculum and they believe that they have developed them to a great extent. Here one could suspect the orientation of the curriculum which clearly points towards the school lessons. Here one could see a discordance between strategic choices and central policy in that for more than 10 years now, the central choice is interdisciplinarity and the promotion of basic competences, as these are recommended by the European space of education[2];
- the three competences that are isolated negatively are: 9 (Ability to do educational research in different contexts), 14 (Ability to lead or coordinate a multidisciplinary educational team (in the context of a Comenius project, for example) and 15 (Ability to understand trends in education and be able to recognise possible applications) which were not considered important, were not offered by the curriculum and had not been developed by the students. We have however already mentioned them.

Then, there is one competence, 5 (Ability to recognise and to respect students' differences and the different ways to learn), which is considered more important than the overall means, the students themselves believe that they have developed it a lot even though in the curriculum they have encountered it only as much as the others.

[2] http://mobilitycompetences.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-8-key-competences-of-European-Union.pdf

Finally, there are eight (8) competences that appear with a statistically significant difference only in one column. There are six (6) with a positive sign and two (2) with a negative.

Of the six with a positive sign, one (1) appears in the first column, three (3) in the second and two (2) in the third column. More analytically:

- competence 25 (Ability to adjust the curriculum to a specific group with specific needs) is considered to be very important for the students, they have encountered it in the curriculum as much as the others and they themselves have developed it as much as the others;
- for competences 16 (Commitment to the progress and achievement of our students, which depend on the quality of our work), 21 (Ability to make use of e-learning and to integrate it into the learning environments) and 22 (Ability to improve the teaching/learning environment), the students claim that they have encountered them a lot (above the average) in the curriculum, while on the one hand they consider them as important as the others, and on the other they have developed them as much as the others;
- regarding competences 3 (Ability to transmit values which we believe in, such as active citizenship and democracy) and 6 (Awareness of the fact that learning can take place in different ways and in different places), the students claim that they have developed them more than the others while they consider them, objectively, as important as the others and they have encountered them in the curriculum as much as the others.

In conclusion, from the specific competences, the students seem to promote those that are related to teacher training and especially those that have a relationship with the school classroom. This picture ties in absolutely with the corresponding picture that was analysed in the case of the generic competences.

9. Discussion and conclusion

The discussion that can begin from the above results has multiple points of entry: the policy makers, the university Departments, its students, and so on. In this text, from the very outset, we have deliberately placed the state and factors relating to policy production in methodological brackets. Consequently, we will stay with the Department and its students. Let's start with the latter.

They choose the particular Department in order to become primary school teachers. Although the choice is a positive one, it appears that for it to be made, in many cases, it was determined by a series of failures and/or frustrations. The reason why this profession is chosen seems to be linked to three factors. First, work related, because it provides some hope, since it is one of the few courses of study that still lead to permanent and steady work. Secondly, "strategical" because those who choose it hope that "despite everything, something will happen and appointments will be made", as in any case they have got used to the political class of the country. Thirdly, personal, because it is a "good job for women" in that in the future they will acquire family obligations. In terms of the studies and their content, the view of the majority of students seems to reproduce a traditional and static model of the teacher, to the extent that the question arises of whether the superiorization of these studies was necessary or whether the view of the way teachers are trained has evolved. Whether or not this picture originates in powerful pre-existing stereotypes, more so since

a significant portion of the students are the children of teachers, or whether it is a product of the particular curriculum is a question that can only be answered with long-term study and in-depth interviews.

As far as the Department and its staff are concerned, what emerges is a dual concern, on the one hand there is the need to shape a curriculum that will prepare teachers, and on the other, there needs to be an attempt to broaden and move towards alternative routes since, on the one hand, there is the fear that the existence of the Department may be in danger, and on the other, there are the ominous predictions for the professional uptake of the graduates. This environment of flux, which is characteristic of a "society of risk", pushes towards differentiations in the expected learning outcomes and so consequently towards differentiations in the lessons on offer (usually optional courses) and other educational activities (for example, 6 months voluntary work with an NGO). For some students this seems to be welcome, but it is by no means certain that it is understood by the majority of students.

One concludes that in an uncertain and unstable social and employment environment, where for the first time since the second world war the younger generation is less likely to live as well as, or better than, its parents, the determination of expected learning outcomes is difficult, uncertain and risky. In this climate, a return to the tried and tested is seen by many as a desirable choice.

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